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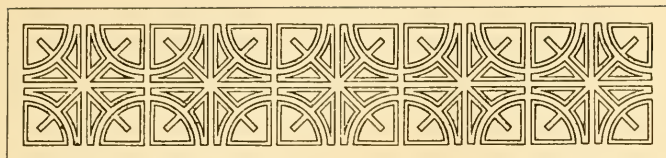


LACLEDE
THE
FOUNDER
OF
ST. LOUIS



OMPLIMENTS OF
HE MERCHANTS-LACLEDE NATIONAL BANK OF ST. LOUIS.

Robert



*I*N memory of the Founder of St. Louis, landmarks—a street and a park—have been named, corporations have been titled, and celebrations have been held. But during the 146 years of the existence of this community no monument has been reared to the merchant—Laclede.

When the banking room of the Merchants-Laclede National Bank of St. Louis was remodeled, a place of honor was made above the entrance. By the unanimous vote of the directors, it was decided to put there the bust (in bronze) of Laclede, whose name has been borne by the institution nearly half a century. The commission has been executed by George Julian Zolnay. The time is deemed fitting to recall the Founder's personality and to present a concise narrative of the Founding, with the reasons why St. Louis may feel pride therein.

*The Merchants-Laclede National Bank
of St. Louis.*

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LACLEDE

THE FOUNDER OF ST. LOUIS

By WALTER B. STEVENS



HE founding of St. Louis was not an accident. Into it entered definite purpose and wise planning. Unerring decision and splendid courage were called into play. All of these together won in the face of international complication, of local chaos.

A born leader of men, trained by widely varied experience, having reached the prime of his years, was the founder. In the light of succeeding events, with the generations following his, Pierre Laclede has grown. Every scrap of information about him has become of increasing interest. There is no need to idealize, to romance. All truth established by research adds to the enchantment of his personality.

Laclede came from the Valley of the Aspe, at the foot of the Pyrennees, very near the border between France and Spain. The chateau, still owned by a branch of the Laclede family, is in the village of Bedous. They were "de Laclede." They had a crest. The founder of St. Louis dropped the "de." He was plain "M. Laclede" to all who came to live in his colony. A signet-ring he wore was the only suggestion of pride in birth. The estate at Bedous went to an elder brother who was "master of forests and streams" for a province, a position of importance. On the estate was a mill. The younger brother did not come to this country until he was thirty-one years old. He was well educated. He had acquired a practical knowledge of milling as well as of farming. He was versed in the civil engineering of a century and a half ago. When Pierre Laclede decided to seek fortune in New France, the family supplied him with sufficient capital to enter commercial life in New Orleans. Times were bad. The year was 1755. An intercolonial war came on. The Indians in what are now Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia, inspired by the English, threatened the French settlements of Louisiana. Colonial troops were raised for a campaign. Laclede offered himself and was accepted. He was given a commission and placed upon the staff of Colonel Antoine Maxent, one of the foremost business men of New Orleans. In old records of 1755-60 the name of Laclede appears among those prominent in that community.

When the campaign was over and peace seemed assured, Maxent, Laclede, and several others who had volunteered, were given by the Governor-General the privilege of exclusive trade with the Indians on the Missouri and Upper Mississippi for a period of eight years. The founding of St. Louis followed. This concession was bestowed in 1762. Nearly an entire year was consumed in the elaborate preparation to take advantage of it. In large part the stock of goods for trading was imported. Family tradition has it that Laclede made a visit to his old home in France. One of the young men of Bedous returned to New Orleans with him and joined the expedition. He was Jean B. Ortes, a carpenter and cabinet maker. He built the first church at what is now Second and Walnut Streets. His descendants are people of standing and substance in this generation of St. Louisans.

On the third day of August, 1763, Laclede with his boats, which Auguste Chouteau called "a considerable armament," left New Orleans. On the third of November, by dragging with the cordelle, a rope several hundred feet long, by poling in the shallows, by rowing, by the aid of a low sail when the wind was right, the expedition arrived at Ste. Genevieve. That was the only settlement in what is now Missouri. Six miles up the river, on the Illinois side, was Fort Chartres, the finest fortification of its time in America, built by the French at a cost of a million dollars. There Laclede was welcomed by officers who knew of his standing at New Orleans and there he found temporary storage for his cargoes. But there, also, he gathered the full import of the strange news which had followed him up the river. France had ceded to England, by treaty of peace, her possessions east of the Mississippi. Neyon de Villiers was commandant with headquarters at Fort Chartres and with jurisdiction north, east and west. He had just received his orders from New Orleans to prepare for evacuation. He was calling in the garrisons from Vincennes on the Wabash, from Massaque on the Ohio, from Fort Pees or Peoria, on the Illinois. He was even withdrawing the recently established post on the Osage, although that was west of the territory ceded. Neyon de Villiers meant a clean sweep. He was strongly advising the habitants of the French villages from Kaskaskia to Cahokia to abandon their homes and to go to New Orleans with him, promising to secure to them grants of land. While Neyon de Villiers was courteous to Laclede, he made no concealment of his policy which was to take down the river with him all of the settlers he could persuade to go. He advised Laclede that the hospitality of Fort Chartres might be very brief

certainly ending with the arrival of the English to take possession of the fort. And meantime the Indians, who had been allies of the French, were assembling with the avowed intention to prevent the English from taking possession of the fort.

With this crisis confronting him, Laclede waited no longer than was necessary to store his goods. He set out to find a site for his colony. He did not give an hour's consideration to the discouraging advice of de Villiers. Acquaintance with the people was cultivated. Information about the region west of the river was sought. Laclede declared his purpose. He told officers and habitants that he was going to stay. He would found "an establishment suitable to his commerce." Ste. Genevieve would not do. When he stopped there on the way up the river he did not find storage room sufficient for one-fourth of his cargoes. Furthermore, he rejected the location "because of its distance from the Missouri."

In December, taking Auguste Chouteau with him, Laclede began the exploration for a site. He went as far north as the mouth of the Missouri. So long as he lived Auguste Chouteau remembered vividly that search. He wrote in his diary that Laclede, "after having examined all thoroughly, fixed upon the place where he wished to form his settlement." Where the Court House of St. Louis now stands the ground originally was seven or eight feet higher than it is now. The elevation was so marked that the spot was known to two or three generations of St. Louisans as "the Hill." To the westward stretched a rolling prairie in that day. Eastward it was possible to see through a forest, which was without underbrush, the water surface of the Mississippi. The immediate river front was a limestone cliff from thirty-five to fifty feet high. Between the edge of this low cliff and "the Hill" the ground rose in two terraces of not abrupt ascent. What Laclede said, as his vision comprehended the scene, Auguste Chouteau remembered. "He did not hesitate a moment to form there the establishment he proposed. Besides the beauty of the site, he found there all of the advantages to form a settlement which might become very considerable hereafter."

And when Laclede had gone nearer the river, and had marked, at what is now the corner of Main and Walnut streets, the exact spot for the house which was to be the headquarters, he said to the boy of thirteen: "You will come here as soon as navigation opens, and will cause this place to be cleared, in order to form a settlement after the plan that I will give you."

Neyon de Villiers did not get away from Fort Chartres until summer. In the time between the selection of his site and the departure of the commandant, Laclede was very busy. Against the exodus he used his power of persuasion. He advised the habitants not to go down the river. He told them of the opportunities which the new settlement would offer. He gained the confidence of these people. He won. Habitants turned from the official head to the born leader. When, at length, Neyon de Villiers floated down the river, only the timorous and the weak went with him. The commandant was resentful. Yet such was the tact of Laclede that no open outbreak occurred. The founder carried on his campaign to win settlers for St. Louis up to the very day of the commandant's departure. He drew to him the strong and the courageous.

There was more than the talk of the promoter to influence the habitants that spring of 1764. Laclede gave abundant evidence of the kind of founder he was. As early as the 10th of February, he loaded at Fort Chartres a boat with tools and some goods for trade. He picked thirty men, "nearly all mechanics," most of them young and unmarried, the flower of those French villages on the east side. He put Auguste Chouteau in charge of "the first thirty," saying to him: "You will proceed and land at the place where we marked the trees. You will commence to have the place cleared. Build a large shed to contain the provisions and the tools and some small cabins to lodge the men. I give you two men on whom you can depend, who will aid you very much. I will rejoin you before long."

At the end of the fifth day the first boat had been poled and dragged up the river sixty miles, to the mouth of the gully at the head of which were the marked trees. The next morning the building of St. Louis was begun. Laclede made two or three hurried trips to the site that spring, but he spent most of his time superintending the shipment of the goods from Fort Chartres and telling his plans for the settlement.

The commandant sailed away with his twenty-one boats. Only eighty of the habitants went with him. Many more than that number had decided to join Laclede. Some moved to the new settlement in the spring. Others waited to gather their crops. When the fall of 1764 came, houses of posts, without windows and doors, and in some cases without roofs, stood in the villages from Kaskaskia to Cahokia for the census of those who had moved to become first families of St. Louis.

Within five years after the founding, St. Louis had a population of 891. That was the number returned by the first Spanish census in 1769. Even earlier the rapid development of trade by Laclede with the Indians was used as an argument in the memorial which was sent from New Orleans to the King of France urging him to take back Louisiana from Spain. That trade was estimated at more than \$60,000 a year.

The plan which Laclede drew for his settlement is the basis of the present map of St. Louis. The founder laid out three streets following the curve of the river front. These are today Main, Second and Third streets; they agree with the lines of Laclede's map. In his planning the founder showed in one particular more foresight than those who came after him. He established a public square, or park, on the river front in the heart of his settlement. The Place d'Armes was the name he bestowed upon the reservation. Its boundaries were the river, Main, Walnut and Market streets, as named at present. The locality was not a steep slope from Main street to the water in those days. The river, when of good stage, swept along the base of a cliff or bluff of rock, about thirty-five feet high. The Place d'Armes was a little plateau with this bold front on the river. In the year 1908, the Civic League of St. Louis planned and proposed to the people of St. Louis a treatment of the river front which was almost an artificial reproduction of Laclede's Place d'Armes, as he tried to preserve it one hundred and forty-five years before. Utilitarian St. Louis, after the election of the first City Council, put a market house on the Place. When the French names of the streets gave way to English, Market street took its title from the practical use to which Laclede's square had been put. Then came the day when St. Louis, looking only westward, saw nothing beautiful in a river front. The Place d'Armes passed into private possession. Across the street from where Laclede located his stone house and his place of business, was built the Merchants' Exchange to become the city's trade center for many years, until the removal to the Chamber of Commerce on Third and Pine streets.

The founder had the vision of the born engineer. His mind was comprehensive in its action. Time vindicated the wisdom of the choice. Laclede studied the shore line to the cliffs overlooking the Missouri. He examined the country back from the Mississippi front. He had no second choice. He did not waver or confer. Here was to be his settlement. Here was just what he had been looking for.

In his experience below, Laclede had seen the danger from high water. He selected for St. Louis a site that would never

overflow. And yet the elevation was not impossible of ascent on the river side or difficult of approach from any other direction. Down the river and up the river were bottom lands. Farther to the north and to the south were higher limestone bluffs. Back of them the country was more rugged. Laclede passed over the high bluffs and low lands. He came to the plateau which his vision told him was the fortunate medium of elevation above the water. With Auguste Chouteau beside him, the founder noted the prairies and the groves. Winter though it was, his agricultural training revealed to him the natural fertility of the soil. Laclede knew something of geology. He saw the outcroppings of limestone. He recognized the abundance of building material, stone and wood, at hand. To be sure, it was not for him to realize what the vast beds of underlying clays promised. The age of cement and concrete was in the future. In so far as a mind keenly observant, informed upon material conditions of the middle of the eighteenth century could fathom, Laclede knew he had found an ideal site. He looked no farther. He committed himself unreservedly. He marked the trees for his own house and business. He located them where for more than one hundred years was to be the center of the commerce of St. Louis.

"A trading post" St. Louis has been called by most of the historians. A trading post was what the syndicate of New Orleans merchants contemplated when they formed the company, and when Laclede started up the river with his "considerable armament." But when the flotilla reached Fort Chartres and the situation with respect to change of sovereignty was revealed, Laclede began the active, aggressive planning for a permanent settlement, not a trading post. He laid out the plan of streets and blocks. He invited settlers. He verbally assigned them property the first summer of the existence of the community. Then came the establishment of government. Immediately thereafter was developed a land system, with permanent titles and property rights. This is not the history of a trading post.

The platting of a townsite, the assigning of lots to settlers on condition of improvement, the giving of written titles—these were departures from trading post methods. St. Louis was of its own class. It began without the usual military garrison and Indian contingent. It had no landholding aristocracy and tenantry. It was no haphazard assembling of squatters about a central point. It started with a site mapped. To every family which came to settle was given a lot and the title was confirmed in writing. The

joiner, the miller, the blacksmith, the baker were among the first to secure homes "in fee simple." More than one element of Americanism entered into the founding, the government and the land system of St. Louis, before 1770. The battle of Lexington was later—in 1773.

Not alone were the settlers and traders of the Illinois country in their recognition of Laclede's influence. When, in 1765, Captain St. Ange de Bellerive, who had been left by Neyon de Villiers, turned over Fort Chartres to Captain Stirling and the English, he marched his garrison of forty French soldiers to St. Louis and remained there. He lived in Laclede's house. He performed the duties of commandant. The news had come up the river that St. Louis was now in Spanish territory. In Lower Louisiana there was revolt. The right to self-government was proclaimed at New Orleans. Over St. Louis the flag of France still floated. Through those years of uncertainty and bloodshed at New Orleans, the settlement of Laclede passed without anything more than well controlled excitement. Laclede awaited the issue in Lower Louisiana. If Lafreniere and his compatriots won, Laclede and St. Ange would join in the organization of the republic. They had created the capital of Upper Louisiana. While the revolution below went on, Laclede was cultivating the fur trade. He was laying foundations for a greater St. Louis.

St. Ange came to St. Louis in 1765. Just after the beginning of 1766 he began to govern. Until that time the habitants had held the locations which Laclede had assigned them for homes. They wanted titles, evidences on paper, of ownership. St. Ange added to his functions the issue of grants or titles. Among the first to take out these grants to the property occupied was Laclede. The founder showed the people his faith in the land system which he had devised. In making his allotments to newcomers, Laclede usually bestowed a quarter of a block. In some cases, which were exceptional, he gave half a block. In a very few instances the assignment covered an entire block. The deeds or grants which St. Ange issued to the holders to confirm the assignments made by Laclede were recorded in a book. The system stood the test of Spanish authority first and of American authority later. Laclede's distribution of land to settlers, confirmed in instruments of writing by St. Ange, remains today undisturbed, with all of the authority of government sustaining it. The livre terrien of St. Ange is the beginning of the realty records of St. Louis.

The year came round which terminated the period of exclusive trading in the Missouri country by Maxent, Laclede

& Company, if indeed that privilege was really in force after the cession by France to Spain. In 1770 arrived the Spanish Governor, Piernas, with a garrison to put into effect Spanish authority. Laclede met the new conditions readily. He had made St. Ange a member of his household. He now welcomed the Spanish Governor and gave him headquarters in his house. A new flag went up in front of the stone house, the yellow between the red. But Laclede still continued to be the power behind the government. He still controlled the fur trade of the Missouri. The personality of the founder was greater than the flag.

In 1774 St. Ange died. Perhaps the old soldier hadn't much to leave. His will was the expression of his confidence and admiration. He named Laclede as the executor of his will.

In 1778 Laclede, coming up the river from New Orleans on the tedious three months' journey, was stricken. He died near the mouth of the Arkansas river. His body was buried at the foot of a tree. The next year an expedition was sent down to bring the body of the founder to St. Louis. The effort was useless. In the flood period the river had undermined the bank. The body of Laclede and the tree which marked his grave had been carried away.

Laclede had "piercing and expressive eyes." He had "an expansive brow" and "a large nose." He was "above the medium height." His complexion was "very dark." These are some of the physical characteristics which those who knew the founder in their youth remembered when they were old.

In forming his conception of Laclede for the bust to be placed in the Merchants-Laclede National Bank of St. Louis, the sculptor, Zolnay, drew upon all of the historical material which was available. He made a study of the copy of the portrait which hangs in the Laclede chateau at Bedous. He took the description of the founder as those who knew Laclede between 1764 and 1778 gave it for record. The portrait, according to the family tradition, was painted by an artist at Bordeaux, on the occasion of Laclede's visit to his home in 1762. Laclede was then about thirty-eight years of age. The sixteen years which followed, with all of the responsibilities of the new community, brought lines of strength into the features. The sculptor has aimed to present the Laclede of the years when permanence had come to St. Louis, when the future growth and prosperity of the settlement was fully assured.

Nowhere is there blemish of meanness or stain of dishonor in the story of the founding of St. Louis. One mistake of judgment, and only one, is chargeable against the founder. In the spring of 1765 the Ste. Genevieve traders ignored the exclusive grant to Laclede. They sent a boat, commanded by Joseph Calve, up the Mississippi, past St. Louis and into the Missouri, carrying goods to be traded to the Indians for furs. A posse from St. Louis followed and brought back the Ste. Genevieve outfit. This was done by the orders of Laclede. When the boat reached St. Louis the cargo was unloaded and stored. There was the mistake. John Duchurut and Louis Viviat, the Ste. Genevieve traders, protested to the superior council at New Orleans. The council concluded that confiscation of the goods was unjustifiable. Laclede was directed to pay to the Ste. Genevieve traders the value of the cargo, but no damages for the detention of the property or the loss of the trade to the Ste. Genevieve firm. The case was not concluded until 1767. Appraisers determined that the cargo was worth \$1,297. If Laclede had turned back the Ste. Genevieve boat without taking the goods, presumably he would have been within his rights.

When the estate of Laclede was inventoried one item told the story of the founder's sacrifice of self-interest for the help of others. It was:

"Notes of various parties irrecoverable, 27,891 livres."

Laclede left the mill and the water power, which sold at auction for 2,000 livres. He left a farm on the grand prairie. This farm brought 750 livres or \$150. Colonel Maxent, the New Orleans partner in the firm of Maxent, Laclede & Co. was the chief creditor of Laclede. He chose Auguste Chouteau to be the executor of Laclede's estate. Chouteau was Laclede's stepson. He had been the chief clerk of the firm of Maxent, Laclede & Co. More than this, he had been the trusted confidant of the founder from the beginning of the settlement. The selection of Auguste Chouteau showed two things—the complete confidence Colonel Maxent had in Laclede's family and the disposition to treat his heirs with liberality. In New Orleans as well as in St. Louis, the public spirit of Laclede was known. His invaluable services to St. Louis were recognized. The Governor-General took a personal interest in the settlement of Laclede's affairs. He wrote from New Orleans to the Lieutenant-Governor at St. Louis asking him to interest himself:

"Endeavor to have the heirs of Laclede satisfied as far as possible in regard to what is due the deceased."

Chouteau, after a year, was able to pay Colonel Maxent 2,625 livres and to deliver to him sundry notes, the faces of which were 38,523 livres. But this included 27,527 livres "irrecoverable," and 7,527 livres "which may be collected."

Upon the memorandum submitted to him by Auguste Chouteau, Colonel Maxent wrote "from all of which I release said Chouteau from any responsibility, he having executed his commission."

This was all there was to show for the fifteen years Laclede had devoted to the founding and upbuilding of St. Louis. He had secured to his wife and children a home on Main and Chestnut streets. To protect his partner, Colonel Maxent, from loss on account of the notes, bad and doubtful, which he was carrying, Laclede, the year before he died, conveyed to Colonel Maxent all of his interest in the block of ground and in the buildings thereon, bounded by Main, Second, Walnut and Market streets. His principal asset of value was the mill. Even that had not been a source of profit to him personally. In 1767 he had purchased the mill because it was not equipped to meet the needs of the community. He had expended a great deal of money, increasing the water power and enlarging the capacity. With such public spirit had Laclede managed the mill for eleven years that it had cost him much more than he had made out of it.

The founder of St. Louis did not amass wealth. He formed "a settlement which might become hereafter one of the finest cities of America." With foresight which seems marvelous now, he located his settlement and planned it. He carried the community through the crisis of organization and established government. He drew to him strong men from half a dozen other settlements, much older and seemingly permanent. He distributed the lots without cost to the newcomers. He obtained for the holders formal confirmation of the holdings. He made St. Louis the capital of Upper Louisiana with a population nearly half as large as New Orleans.

An eminent French engineer, Nicollet, came to St. Louis in 1836. He worked five or more years on an elaborate hydrographic survey of the region west of the Mississippi, including the Valley of the Missouri and the parts northward. Assigned to assist him was a young lieutenant of the army, Fremont, afterwards the Pathfinder. Returning with his notes and data, Nicollet took up his residence in Baltimore and prepared his report. He died before the manuscript went to the printer. The government published the report in 1843.

While pursuing his scientific work Nicollet became deeply interested in the early history of St. Louis. He devoted time to his research. Auguste Chouteau had died only a few years before. Pierre Chouteau was still living. With him the engineer conversed frequently and at length about the founder and the founding of St. Louis. He avowed his intention to write in detail what he had learned. To his care was intrusted the diary which Auguste Chouteau had kept from the beginning of the settlement through more than forty years. Other papers relating to Laclede and the pioneer period of St. Louis were loaned to Nicollet. All of this historical material of priceless value was carried to Baltimore, but was never returned. It was destroyed by fire.

When the War Department officials examined the papers left by Nicollet they found, with the hydrographic report a sketch of the founding of St. Louis, possibly the first chapter of what the author intended to write. They incorporated this sketch in the public document devoted to the hydrographic survey.

Referring to the origin of St. Louis in the grant "to a company of merchants in New Orleans," Nicollet says: "M. Laclede, the principal projector of the company, and withal a man of great intelligence and enterprise, was placed in charge of the expedition."

One historic fact which much impressed the French engineer, after he had traversed the Trans-Mississippi region from St. Louis northward, was the wisdom Laclede exercised in the selection of his site. This Nicollet dwelt upon. He had obtained from the documents loaned to him and from interviews with the early settlers still living a description of the site of St. Louis as it was when Laclede saw it first in December, 1763.

"The slope of the hills on the river side," Nicollet wrote, "was covered by a growth of heavy timber overshadowing an almost evergreen sward free from undergrowth. The limestone bluff rises to an elevation of about eighty feet over the usual recession of the waters of the Mississippi and is crowned by an upland or plateau extending to the north and west, and presenting scarcely any limit to the foundation of a city entirely secure from the invasion of the river. At the time referred to, this plateau presented the aspect of a beautiful prairie, but already giving the promise of renewed luxurious vegetation in consequence of the dispersion of the larger animals of the chase and the annual fires being kept out of the country."

Nicollet continued his narrative: "It was on this spot that the prescient mind of M. Laclede foresaw and predicted the future importance of the town to which he gave the name of St. Louis and about which he discoursed a few days afterwards with so much enthusiasm in the presence of the officers at Fort Chartres. But winter had now set in (December), and the Mississippi was about to be closed by ice. M. Laclede could do no more than cut down trees and blaze others to indicate the place which he had selected. Returning afterward to the fort where he spent the winter, he occupied himself in making every preparation for the establishment of the new colony."

With practical tact Laclede treated a crisis before St. Louis was two months old. At the same time he established an important policy for the community. Auguste Chouteau and "the first thirty" had built the great shed for the temporary storage of the goods. They had put together cabins for themselves. They were assembling the rock and the timbers for Laclede's house which was to serve for headquarters of the fur company. The Missouris arrived. There were 125 warriors and the complement of squaws and papposes. No hostility was shown. On the other hand there was embarrassing friendliness. The Missouris announced that they would build a village and live beside the white men. They begged food. They helped themselves to tools. Some of the intending settlers who had come over from Cahokia to join the settlement showed alarm and began to move back to the east side. Auguste Chouteau sent word of the emergency to Laclede at Fort Chartres. Meanwhile he put the squaws to work for pay, digging the cellar for Laclede's house and carrying away the dirt. The founder came quickly in response to Auguste Chouteau's call and with due formality went into council with the Missouris. The chiefs repeated their decision to become part of the settlement and to depend upon the white men for protection against their enemies, the Illinois nation. Laclede listened and promised an answer the next day.

Auguste Chouteau remembered that diplomatic speech and wrote it into his diary. It was a speech which averted a crisis and which laid the foundation of an Indian policy of long and far-reaching advantage to St. Louis. Laclede called the chiefs together, as he had promised. He went over the reasons they had given for joining his settlement. He reminded them that they would be placing themselves within reach of their hereditary enemies, the Illinois nation. He pictured an awful fate which he, with the best of intentions

could not avert, if they, the Missouris, came to live where they could be so easily attacked from the east side of the river.

"I warn you, as a good father," he said, "that there are six or seven hundred warriors at Fort de Chartres, who are there to make war against the English—which occupies them fully at this moment, for they turn all of their attention below Fort de Chartres, from whence they expect the English—but if they learn you are here, beyond the least doubt they will come here to destroy you. See now, warriors, if it be not prudent on your part to leave here at once, rather than to remain to be massacred, your wives and your children to be torn to pieces and their limbs thrown to dogs and birds of prey. Recollect, I speak to you as a good father. Reflect well upon what I have told you and give me your answer this evening. I can not give you any longer time, for I must return to Fort de Chartres."

That night the Missouris departed, going up the river of their name to their old home. Laclede sent to Cahokia and brought over corn to give them for food. He also distributed among them some powder, balls and cloth. The visit of the tribe had lasted fifteen days. By the judicious distribution of vermilion, awls and verdigris in small quantities among the women, Auguste Chouteau had nearly completed the digging of the cellar for the large stone house.

Nicollet says the Missouris maintained the friendly relations, coming to St. Louis every summer. "They came down in their canoes, bringing along with them their wigwams and locating themselves near St. Louis, their women aiding the colonists in their rural occupations and in building their houses. The Osages visited the place three or four times a year, but not in a body. After awhile all of the other north-western nations adopted the same policy. And even the Sacs and Foxes, after the destruction of the Illinois nation, having driven away the Peorias who were the last remnants of this nation, came to trade away their maple sugar, their pecans, etc."

Auguste Chouteau maintained and fostered this St. Louis Indian policy which Laclede inaugurated. Nicollet, traversing the wilds in his survey work, found the family name "to this day" (1836-40), "after a lapse of seventy years, still a passport that commands safety and hospitality among all of the Indian nations of the United States, north and west."

John Jacob Astor, sending his most trusted and efficient lieutenants to wrest the fur trade from St. Louis, was baffled by this well established relationship with the Indians and

decided it to be expedient to go into partnership with the descendants of Laclede rather than to attempt competition.

South of Pau, sixty miles, the last half by diligence, is the home of an old family of France, a member of which was the founder of St. Louis. The Laclede chateau is there today, not only in perfect preservation but occupied by descendants of Pierre Laclede's older brother. It is "The Chateau" with the entire population of Bedous. That Pierre Laclede crossed the ocean and established one of the great cities of America is a household tale in Bedous. At the Laclede chateau the memory of Pierre Laclede is preserved not merely in the portrait. An upper room is still known as Pierre Laclede's. It is occupied by the furniture which Pierre Laclede used. From the window, across the valley is pointed out the "Liguest domain." This was the inheritance of Pierre, the younger brother, coming to him from his mother's side of the house. And the family tradition is that Pierre Laclede turned the Liguest domain into cash to help finance the expedition which founded the present city of St. Louis. Upon the domain is a stone mill said to have been built in the time of the Moors. This mill was operated by Pierre Laclede before he came to New France. It was on the Liguest domain that the youth gained the practical knowledge of milling which he put to account in the creation of Chouteau pond and the great stone mill known to several generations of St. Louisans. The Valley of the Aspe is fertile in production and beautiful in scenery. Thirty miles south, through the Valley of Labadie, is the Spanish border. In the region of Bedous are thermal springs similar to some which, more accessible, have become famous bathing resorts in France. A railroad has been surveyed through this valley, where the founder of St. Louis was born and passed his boyhood and early manhood. If it is built it will shorten the distance between Paris and Madrid eight or ten hours. The Bedous traditions have it that after Laclede obtained his fur-trading concession from the French authorities at New Orleans, he returned to his old home in 1762, raised capital by parting with all he had there, sat for his portrait at Bordeaux, took with him several of the adventurous young men of the valley, and set sail for New Orleans to conduct the expedition up the Mississippi.

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